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ABSTRACT

Effects were explored of a multifaceted program of higher and secondary education for former drug addicts at Topic House, Nassau County, New York. Community college courses, High School Equivalency Diploma classes, vocational and technical training, and orientation for teachers and participating addicts, were among the activities offered. Of the 75 Topic House residents involved in the 1969-70 program, 44 are now (Fall 1970) working and attending Nassau Community College, 26 are working full time, one has married and two are back on drugs. Ten persons are studying for equivalency diplomas. Fifteen have expressed interest in other vocational areas, and suitable training centers are being sought. Persistence in therapy, academic and work performance, and certain other criteria seem to favor those who have participated in the pilot programs. Numerous recommendations in such areas as public relations, course planning, and professional training, were formulated; and the Nassau County Drug Abuse and Addiction Commission has already taken steps to implement inhouse courses for Topic House patients and staff. (LY)

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REPORT OF PILOT PROJECT

Study of a Pilot Educational Program Between Nassau Community College and Topic House (Nassau County Drug Addiction Rehabilitation Center)

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SUMMARY OF THE PILOT PROJECT'S OPERATIONS

This study was concerned with the involvement of ex-drug addicts in a multi-faceted educational program. Sponsored by the Bureau of Occupational Education Research (New York State Education Department), and conducted jointly by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Nassau County Drug Abuse and Addiction Commission, and Nassau Community College, the investigators explored the effects of an educational program on ex-addicts. It ran from July 1969 - June 1970.

The program included:

1. Education at Nassau Community College
   a. matriculated students for the Associate in Science Degree, the Associate in Applied Science Degree, and the Associate in Arts Degree.
   b. individual courses. Sequences of appropriate courses (long-term and short-term) leading to fulfillment of stated goals.
   c. remediation courses in mathematics, English, and reading.
2. Education offered at colleges other than Nassau Community College.
3. High School Equivalency Diploma study classes.
4. Noncollegiate courses (a limited number) in vocational and technical skills.
5. Orientation seminars for preparation of the residents for educational experiences.
6. Orientation sessions for teachers involved in the program.
7. "Pep" sessions for participating residents designed to maintain their interest and motivation.
8. Special events, including a tutorial program, a fashion show, library orientations, and a term-paper orientation.

SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT'S OUTCOMES

1. Attrition rates (split rates) in the Topic House therapeutic program were lower for residents who were involved in the educational program. It would appear that the injection of a comprehensive educational program into the therapeutic program plays a significant role in the retention of addicts in therapy.

2. The data indicated a noticeable contrast in work status between those involved in education and those not so involved. A larger proportion of those involved in the educational program was working.

3. Residents in the educational program participated with non-addict populations in a variety of activities. Many of them functioned well in non-addict society and expressed satisfaction with their experiences. This association seemed to facilitate reentry into "straight" society.

4. A smaller number of those involved in the educational program reverted to drugs compared to those who were not involved.

5. The data indicated a sharp contrast in the number who returned to jail. None of those involved in the educational program returned to jail; 7% of the non-involved group did.

6. Ex-addicts sufficiently motivated can complete college courses successfully. However, several years' experience are probably required to tell whether the completion rate can be sustained.

7. Some residents are ready earlier than others for educational involvement. In the initial stage of therapy, ex-addicts need continuous reinforcement to maintain interest in their studies and confidence in their abilities.

8. Educational involvement afforded the residents the opportunity to learn about career opportunities and to undertake specific courses leading to expressed vocations. As a result of their educational experiences and counseling, some of the ex-addicts were better prepared to formulate realistic decisions about themselves and their vocational goals.

9. The educational program added a new dimension to the ex-addicts' therapy by encouraging them to explore their talents and to strive toward vocational goals. The program provided new and stimulating activities for the residents which may have contributed to their retention in therapy.

Since the drug addict's rehabilitation is generally long range, conclusions and recommendations based upon the findings in this study should be considered tentative.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. An unfortunate time loss takes place for residents who are ready for training but who must wait for the start of a new semester. Though the non-addict population endures the same inconvenience, the consequences can be more severe for the ex-addicts. Colleges and drug commissions should investigate the feasibility of rolling admissions part-time instructional programs to accommodate people when they are ready for training.

a. Exploratory courses in business, liberal arts and technical areas could comprise one answer to rolling admissions. Exploratory courses might be designed to afford residents an opportunity to become acquainted with several fields of learning and to determine whether they might like to pursue these areas for future employment or for further education.

Short-term exploratory courses are not normally included in college curriculums and would have to be designed for the residents.

Classes could be conducted by specialists at therapeutic centers so that all eligible residents, including those not permitted off the premises, might enroll.

b. Because the importance of ex-addicts projecting themselves favorably in job and social situations cannot be emphasized too strongly, it is recommended that a course be offered to achieve this aim. It should be designed to help the residents improve their personal characteristics and social images.

c. A course in "Drug Aide Management" should be considered for ex-addict staff members and for those residents who want to work in addiction treatment. The fundamental objective would be to help them improve their personal characteristics for more effective performance as coordinators in drug abuse rehabilitation programs. The major areas would be personnel management, speech, public relations, organization and management, and personality development. Successful completion of the course could help those preparing for jobs in drug rehabilitation agencies, hospitals, and school districts.

2. The job performance of the ex-addicts on staff reflects some educational and business impoverishment suffered during their addiction periods. Two-year colleges should study the development of curriculums for drug aides. Less-than-2-year certificate programs should also be investigated.

3. In-service training should be available to professionals in educational programs for ex-drug addicts. Teachers of ex-addicts are probably more effective with proper orientation. It was found that the teachers with whom the investigators had the most frequent contacts were the ones who developed the closest relationships with their students. Discussion topics should include the nature of the ex-addict, the therapeutic concept, and the identification of appropriate teaching techniques.

4. The availability of an educational program appears to motivate some residents towards continuation in therapy. Early awareness of the program might stimulate ex-addicts to remain longer in the various intake facilities. Information sessions should be held at intake centers to publicize the program.

5. Visits to various therapeutic centers revealed little contact among drug therapeutic centers, even in proximate locations. The absence of shared experiences diminishes the efforts of the centers. Localities and the state should institute conferences and seminars for personnel connected with therapeutic programs. Discussion items should include educational programs, group techniques, administrative procedures, and community relationships. Emphasis should be placed on the phases of treatment practiced uniquely and in common.

6. It is recommended that a seminar program for professional personnel in colleges (2-year and 4-year), therapeutic drug programs, and drug commissions be conducted to establish interrelationships for the coordination of educational programs and the exchange of ideas.

7. Those responsible for administering educational programs for residents of drug therapeutic centers must appreciate the need for innovative activities. A flexible approach to programming would allow for implementation of worthwhile ventures.

8. A public relations program should be developed to acquaint prospective employers with the vocational potential of trained ex-drug addicts. The program should attempt to:

   a. Break down employer resistence to hiring ex-addicts.

   b. Gauge job markets for ex-addicts.

   c. Bring employers into the educational program as advisors and teachers.

   d. Encourage businessmen to contribute their resources to vocational and educational programs conducted for ex-addicts.

9. It is recommended that drug commissions establish job placement offices as part of their reentry programs. Job placement officers should work closely with those in the educational program (professionals and ex-addicts).

10. The educational component of a drug rehabilitation program should be available to all ex-addicts served, not merely to those in residential centers. This would include the populations of out-patient groups, halfway houses, community based groups, and methadone centers.

CONTINUATION OF THE PROGRAM

At present (Fall 1970), 44 ex-addicts are enrolled at Nassau Community College. Fifteen ex-addicts have expressed interest in other vocational areas, and appropriate training centers are being investigated. The number studying for high school equivalency diplomas is 10.

The Nassau County Drug Abuse and Addiction Commission has acted upon the recommendation of the study regarding implementation of an in-house educational program.

The program includes a course in Human Engineering, which provides residents an opportunity to improve their personal characteristics and social images. The topics include Speech, Grooming, Personality Development, Budgeting and Personal Finance, and Sex Education. Enrollment is voluntary.

Exploratory Courses in Business, Vocational and Liberal Arts. These courses afford residents an opportunity to become acquainted with several fields of learning and to determine whether they want to pursue these areas for future employment or for further education. Enrollment is voluntary.

In-Service training program (Drug Aide Management) for the staff. The program is on a rolling admissions basis for ex-addict staff members and residents who express interest in such training. Enrollment is mandatory.

SUMMER 1970 STATUS OF TOPIC HOUSE RESIDENTS IN PROJECT
THOSE INVOLVED IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM COMPARED WITH THOSE
NOT INVOLVED IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

STATUS	NUMBER OF RESIDENTS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM	
	Involved	Not Involved
Total Number of Residents including out patients (6)	75	85
Working full time	26	12
Working and attending school	(8) 44	-
School full time	2	-
Split	(2)	(53)
Reentered therapy	-	11
Back on drugs	2	10
Jail	-	6
Married-working	-	1
Working	-	1
Unknown	-	24
Married	1	2
Deceased	-	1
Residents in therapy only	-	17

The following chart indicates enrollments at the county's therapeutic houses for the different courses.* The Liberal Arts program will commence shortly.

	TOPIC HOUSE	HALFWAY HOUSE (opened recently)
HUMAN ENGINEERING		
SPEECH	32	20
GROOMING	27	18
PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	36	23
BUDGETING AND PERSONAL FINANCE	26	18
SEX EDUCATION	30	23
BUSINESS FIELD		
BOOKKEEPING AND ACCOUNTING	20	20
DATA PROCESSING	27	27
MARKETING RETAILING	30	30
SECRETARIAL	14	14
VOCATIONAL FIELD		
AUTO MECHANICS	14	12
REFRIGERATION	16	8
COMMERCIAL ART	28	12
ELECTRICAL TRADES	15	11
FOOD TRADES	12	7
BUILDING TRADES	11	10
MARINE MAINTENANCE	13	6
COSMETOLOGY - BARBERING	20	10
TRUCK DRIVING	14	10
MACHINE TRADES	13	7
DRUG AIDE MANAGEMENT	22 (combined)	

* Topic House population = 80
Halfway House population = 32

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